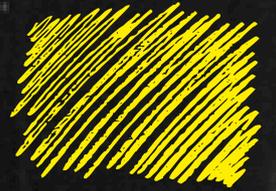


Heritage Centre, IIT Madras presents

Volume 4 - Issue 2

# laSS Panels

March  
2026



Ajit Kumar Kolar writes

## 30 years of saarang

**INSIDE...**

**We're Sorry!**

**Is There a Museum of How**

**Engineering Studies Evolved?!**

**Classified**

**Divertisements**

**The Nightingale visits IIT Madras: M. S. Subbulakshmi**

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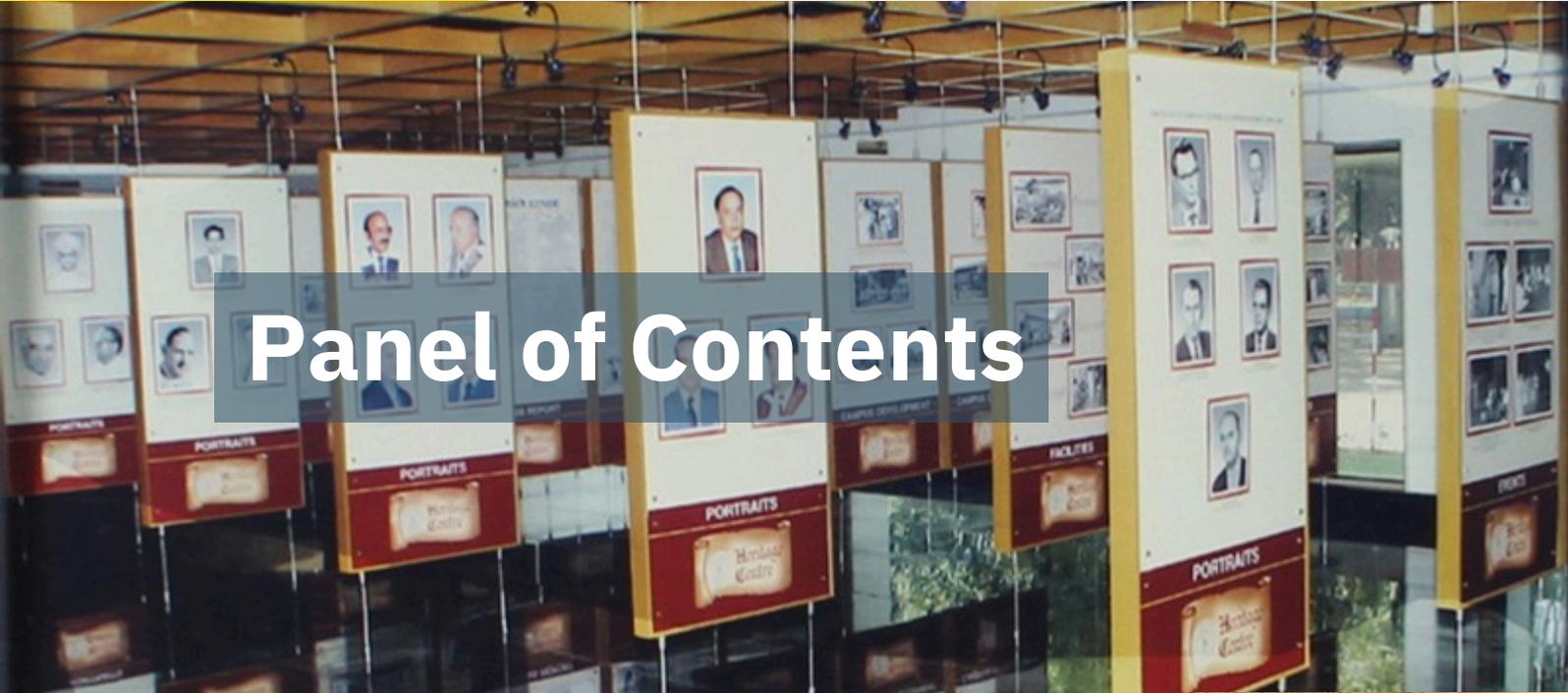


The Heritage Centre was formally inaugurated by Dr. Arcot Ramachandran, former Director of IIT Madras, on 3 March 2006. It is a repository of material of heritage value and historical significance to IIT Madras. "Heritage Centre - Reimagined" was inaugurated on 18 December 2022 by Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman, Honourable Finance Minister of India.

Located centrally on campus, the Heritage Centre has an exhibition space that enjoys an abundance of natural light. The Centre also has a small theatre and a particularly pleasant reading area that offers incomparable views of the green campus.

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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Heritage Centre or IIT Madras.



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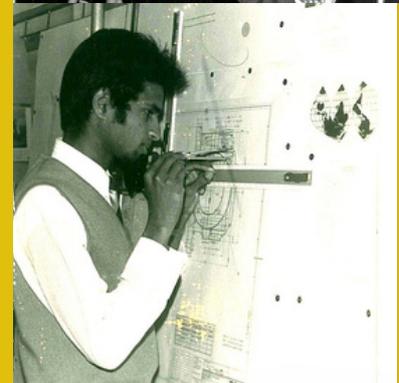
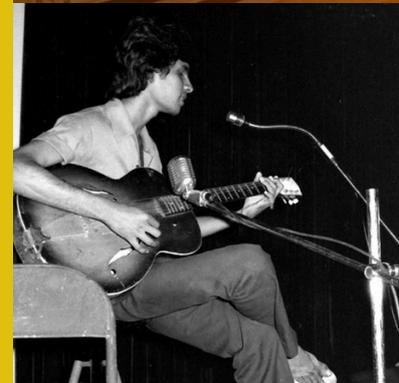
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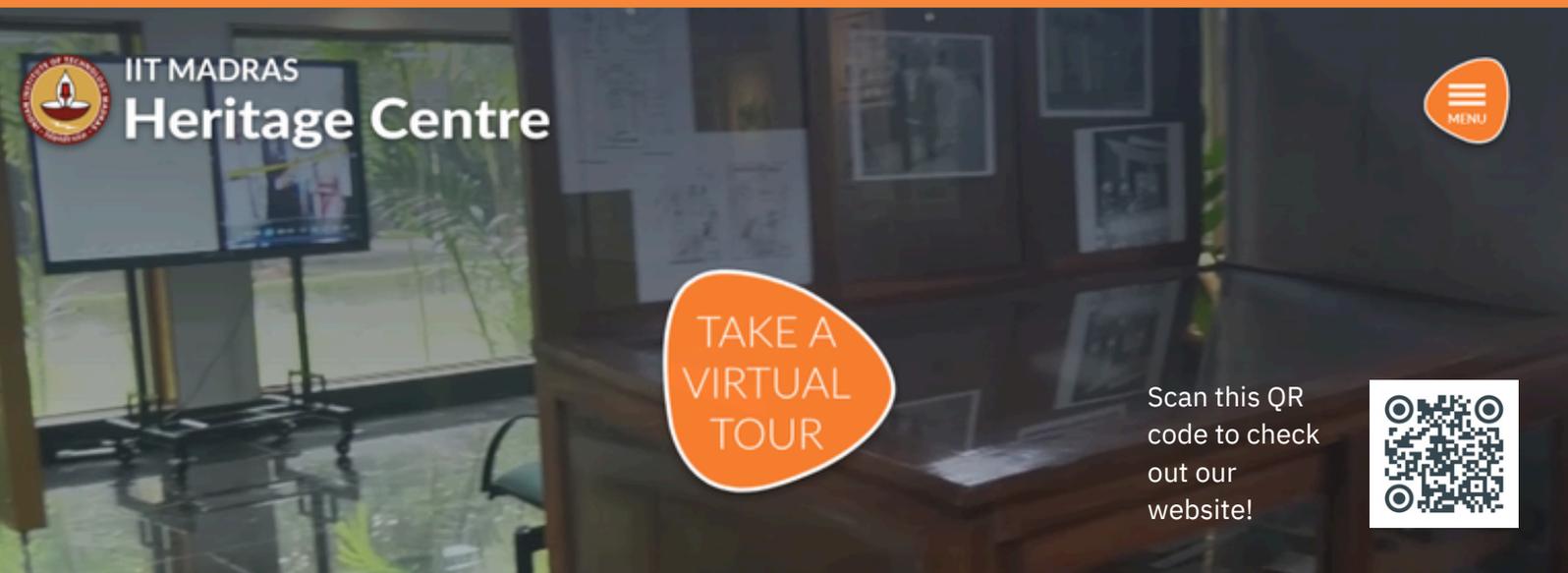
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Administration Building in February 2026.

# EXPLORE THE HERITAGE CENTRE VIRTUALLY!



 IIT MADRAS  
**Heritage Centre**

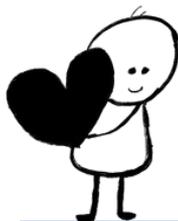


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# Letter from the EDITOR



Memories of winter now evade us as warmer months draw near. The campus wears multiple shades of dried leaves and blossoming flowers. Chilly nights and misty mornings are no longer a common sight, as IIT Madras gears up for new beginnings.

January was rather eventful, with a huge Saarang and Shaastra crowd populating the campus over two weeks. The Heritage Centre, as usual, saw thousands of visitors over the last two months. We have all been on our toes, relentlessly keeping alive this hub of visitors and delegates.

The Heritage Centre conducted two Oral History Interviews with the help of the NPTEL crew. Prof. G. Rangarajan, a retired faculty member from the Department of Physics, was interviewed by his long-time friend Prof. G. Baskaran, and Prof. L. S. Ganesh, a retired faculty member from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, was interviewed by Prof. Jyotirmaya Tripathy and Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam. The videos of the interviews will be uploaded to the Heritage Centre's YouTube channel in the coming days.

In this issue, we have two wonderful articles written by Prof. Ajit Kumar Kolar, the first Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre. One of his articles is about the origins of Saarang, while the other focuses on a personal account of Prof. Kolar's interactions with M. S. Subbulakshmi.

Also in this issue is a moving article by Thirupurasundari Sevvel, in which she talks about her introduction to a living archive through Thomas Tharu, a 1969 batch IIT Madras alumnus.

I wrote a note of apology in a short article rectifying a blunder from the previous issue (January 2026) of *Glass Panels*. The article is about the Inter-IIT Sports Meet, which encouraged plenty of discussions between the Heritage Centre staff and the Sports Secretary, Prabhanjana. Prof. P. Sriram was kind enough to gently point out an error I had made concerning IIT Madras's total number of wins in the tournament. While most of us believed it was 25 wins overall, it turns out we were wrong! The actual number is 21. Read this issue to find out more interesting developments from January and February 2026.

- **Bhuvanesh Santharam**



Send me your feedback at  
[ic35226@imail.iitm.ac.in](mailto:ic35226@imail.iitm.ac.in)

## Our readers write...

### RESPONSES TO THE JANUARY 2026 ISSUE



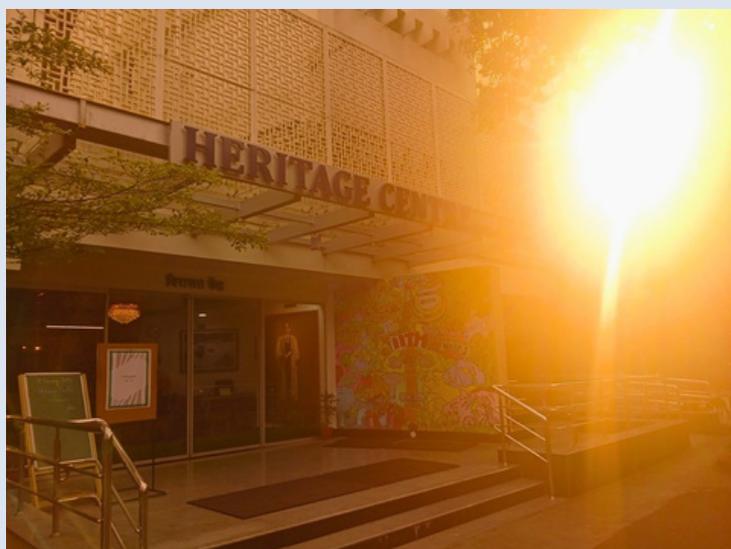
Enjoying *Glass Panels*, as usual. And as usual, excellent job.

Just one comment about the Inter-IIT Sports Meet results. The number in the Wikipedia article is the correct number for IITM's win count; it is only our win number 21. I am a long-time Wikipedia contributor, and some months ago, the IIT sports Wikipedia entry was vandalized to credit four more wins to IITM than the actual number. I subsequently corrected it after cross-checking with the IITM Annual Reports; you can see all this in the

Wikipedia article history. Unfortunately, during that time, the Wikipedia article contained incorrect information, and the official Inter-IIT Sports website replicated the data on its page. My efforts to correct the official site did not bear fruit; I left it at that.

Incidentally, if we look over the Annual Reports of IITM, during the 1960s, sports were not a major thing; the Gymkhana had a lot of what we would call today as IIT-soc activity - quizzes, debates, and the like. Including inter-collegiate competitions, etc. Perhaps, this was to be expected of what was set up as a high academic expectation institution. Or something.

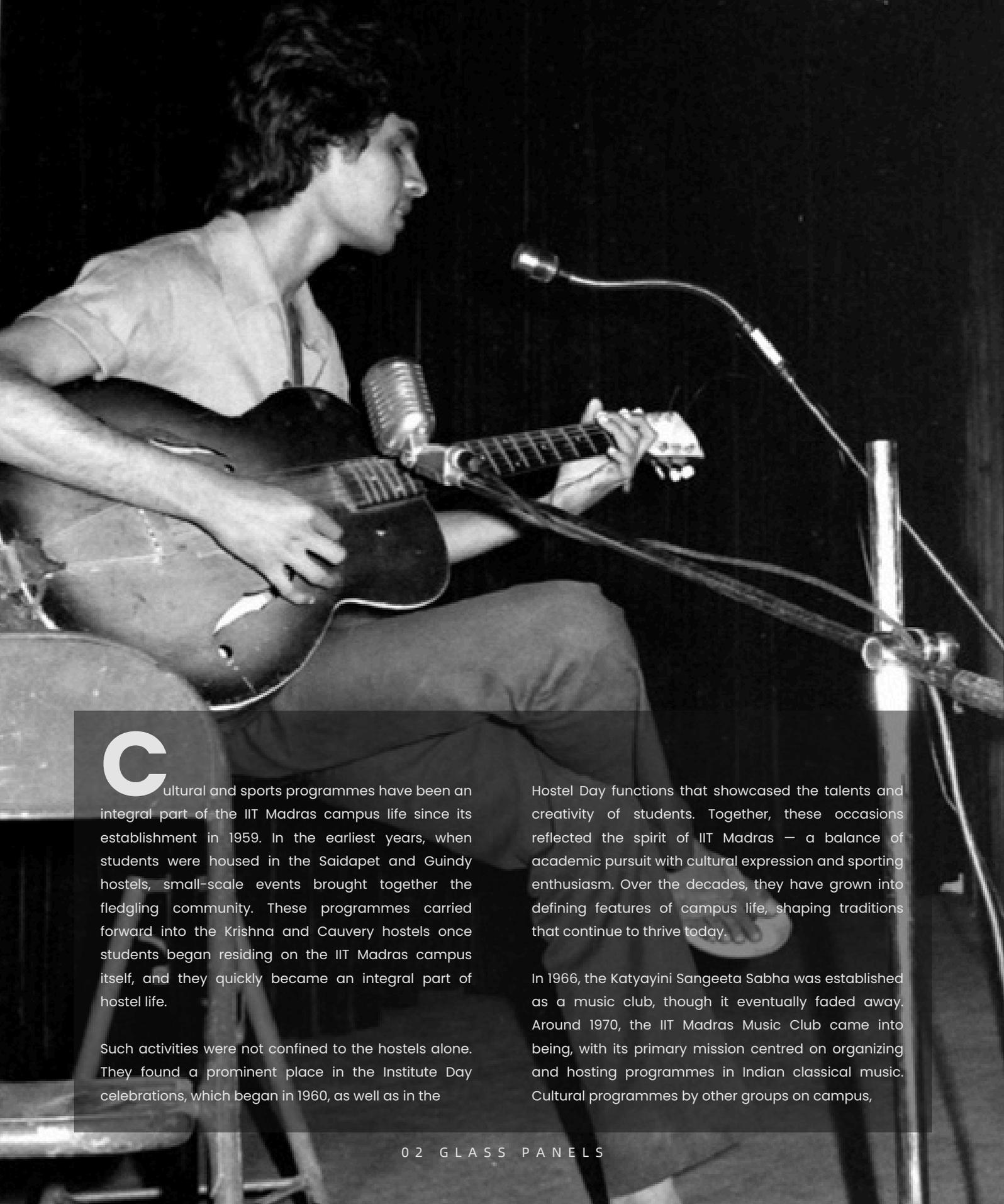
- **Prof. P. Sriram**  
*Former Faculty-in-Charge, Heritage Centre*



A February sunset!

# 30 YEARS OF SAARANG

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ONE OF INDIA'S PREMIER COLLEGE FESTS



**C**ultural and sports programmes have been an integral part of the IIT Madras campus life since its establishment in 1959. In the earliest years, when students were housed in the Saidapet and Guindy hostels, small-scale events brought together the fledgling community. These programmes carried forward into the Krishna and Cauvery hostels once students began residing on the IIT Madras campus itself, and they quickly became an integral part of hostel life.

Such activities were not confined to the hostels alone. They found a prominent place in the Institute Day celebrations, which began in 1960, as well as in the

Hostel Day functions that showcased the talents and creativity of students. Together, these occasions reflected the spirit of IIT Madras — a balance of academic pursuit with cultural expression and sporting enthusiasm. Over the decades, they have grown into defining features of campus life, shaping traditions that continue to thrive today.

In 1966, the Katyayini Sangeeta Sabha was established as a music club, though it eventually faded away. Around 1970, the IIT Madras Music Club came into being, with its primary mission centred on organizing and hosting programmes in Indian classical music. Cultural programmes by other groups on campus,

including the Staff Club, various region-based associations like Kannada, Telugu, Tamil and Hindi, and KV and Central schools, contributed to the vibrant cultural ethos. Gradually, the inter-hostel cultural competitions were initiated. As early as 1964, the Inter-IIT sports competitions were held in the stadium inaugurated by the Nawab of Pataudi, the Indian cricket captain. So even by the mid 1960s, the cultural and sports scene on our campus was truly lively.

The inter-hostel competitions gave impetus to the start of inter-collegiate cultural competitions at the Open Air Theatre (OAT), where the best talent from the city colleges participated. I was one of the Krishnites who, in the early 1970s, eagerly looked forward to these competitions and thoroughly enjoyed them—and learnt a lot! A few of the participants went on to make their names in the music field of the country. And then Mardi Gras happened! In 1974, the inter-collegiate competitions turned more inclusive and colourful with the naming of the cultural festival as MG, short for Mardi Gras. The student secretaries of the time were greatly impressed by the variety, novelty, and scale of the IIT Bombay festival, which had started in 1971 as Mood Indigo. An idea developed that IITM must graduate from a limited inter-collegiate festival, mostly confined to city colleges, to the level of a national student cultural festival. This resulted in MG 1974, which went on to become a truly national festival

and soon arguably the most popular one, so much so that participating in it became a “status symbol” for college students.

In the early 1990s, a feeling emerged among some on the IITM campus that, however popular and well-established MG was, the relevance of the name to the campus cultural ethos could be reconsidered. The type of cultural programmes in the festival, the participants, the location, and the timing of the festival during the Pongal season (mid-January) in a Madras City campus, lush with heritage vegetation and wildlife—part of the Raj Bhavan forest area—suggested that a name of more immediate relevance to the festival might be appropriate. When this idea was floated initially, there was a difference of opinion among the campusites, with quite a few vociferous arguments on both sides. Over time, most of the differences were ironed out, though some remained unconvinced about the change, and the Board of Students eventually passed the proposal to rename the festival.

Campusites were invited to suggest names for the festival, yielding about 300 entries in various languages. A student group, guided by Dean Prof. P. Srinivasa Rao of Mechanical Engineering, was tasked with finalizing the choice. After several rounds of elimination, six names emerged as favorites—one of them was *Sarang*.



The inauguration ceremony of Mardi Gras 1995 — the final time the festival bore this iconic name before becoming *Sarang*.



A photograph taken in the green room behind the Open Air Theatre stage in 1995, after a Mardi Gras show. You can spot me standing, third from the left.

While the final decision was hanging in the balance, some of us explored the meanings of these suggested names by consulting available dictionaries. *Sarang* embodies a multitude of meanings: sun, peacock, bee, snake, frog, butterfly, cloud, lake, a family of birds including lovebirds, lion, elephant, spotted deer, antelope, male deer with antlers, colourful, and a raga in Indian classical music. The word appears repeatedly in Kalidasa's writings with general reference to nature. The student group appreciated these meanings, many of which resonated with aspects of the natural heritage of our campus. They were particularly impressed with three: "male deer with antlers," which the IITM campus is known for; "elephants," integral to our Gajendra Circle; and "sun," as the festival was held

during the period of astronomical significance marking the beginning of the sun's northward journey.

The student group experimented with different spellings of the name to avoid distorted pronunciation, and finally agreed on SAARANG—seven letters with two As—symbolising the seven *swaras* (notes) unique to Indian classical music.

This name was officially communicated to all concerned and, since January 1996, has become synonymous with IITM culfest and continues to be popular with the student body on a national level. It has stood the test of time for 30 years, and it is hoped it will continue in the future also for many more years.



### Ajit Kumar Kolar

*a retired faculty member of the Department of Mechanical Engineering at IIT Madras, was the first Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre and served as the Institute's Cultural Advisor from 1992 to 1996. In addition to his academic and administrative contributions, he is remembered for his abiding interest in classical music.*

# IS THERE A MUSEUM ABOUT HOW ENGINEERING STUDIES EVOLVED?

ENCOUNTERS WITH A LIVING ARCHIVE



Thomas Tharu in Germany, 1970.

**I**s there a museum that documents how engineering studies evolved, not just through inventions, but through classrooms, instruments, habits of thinking, and the quiet discipline of learning?

If such a museum exists, it is often not announced grandly. It lives in drawing boxes worn smooth by decades of use, in slide rules with fading markings, in carefully sharpened pencils and inked lettering templates. It lives in the hands of engineers who were trained before screens replaced sheets, before software replaced intuition, before precision was automated.

I first encountered this living archive through the late Thomas Tharu, a Madras Literary Society member, an engineer by profession, and an avid book lover. He spoke of engineering not merely as a career, but as a way of thinking that demanded patience, accuracy, and deep respect for process. When he showed me his instruments from the 1950s and '60s, it felt like opening a time capsule.

There were drawing tools that demanded steady hands and sharper minds: compasses, set squares, protractors, scale rulers, lettering guides, and the iconic drawing box itself. Each object carried the

weight of effort; mistakes could not be undone with a click. One learned precision through repetition, clarity through discipline, and problem-solving through method, not shortcuts.

What struck me most was not nostalgia, but rigor. Engineering education in that era was intensely tactile and manual. Students learned by drawing every line themselves, calculating every value, and understanding every error. The tools shaped the thinker. The process trained the mind to slow down, observe, and respect accuracy.

That same feeling returned when I visited the Heritage Centre at IIT Madras. Seeing similar instruments preserved, drawing boards, laboratory equipment, early computing devices, and handwritten notes was genuinely thrilling. It affirmed that engineering education itself has a heritage worth documenting. Not just the breakthroughs, but the pedagogy. Not just the outcomes, but the journey.



An instrument box contributed to the Heritage Centre by Thomas Tharu.

Institutions like IITs serve as partial museums of this evolution. They hold within them multiple eras of learning: from chalkboards and drafting tables to simulation labs and many more. Yet the transition is rarely linear. Each generation builds upon the last, often unknowingly carrying forward principles that were shaped by those early tools - clarity, logic, precision, and accountability.

A true museum of engineering education would not merely display objects. It would tell stories: of long nights over drawing sheets, of ink-stained fingers, of calculation errors caught at the last moment, of the humility that comes from working without undo buttons. It would show how engineering was once taught as a craft before it became a profession, and how that craft shaped character as much as competence.

Remembering Thomas Tharu, who has also contributed his objects and tools to the IIT Heritage Centre, and his quiet pride in his tools made one thing

clear: engineering education is not only about technological advancement. It is about the evolution of thinking. And sometimes, the most valuable lessons are preserved not in textbooks or software, but in well-used instruments passed down with care, and in the people who understood their worth.

I have also seen this continuity of engineering education within my own family. My grandfather, Dr. Ki. Ra. Ilango, a mining engineer who studied in India and Germany, preserved his tools and academic material with quiet care. So did my grandmother's father, a railway engineer. Their collections included wooden table scales, compasses, wooden engineering boxes, drafting pens, tracing papers, and meticulously prepared reports. These were not memorabilia; they were working instruments, shaped by years of disciplined use.

Seeing these objects across two generations made something clearer to me. Through these parallel instances, one personal, one shared by a mentor, I was



Thomas Tharu's certificates and medals preserved by the Heritage Centre.

able to appreciate engineering education more deeply. Not as a static syllabus, but as a lineage. A transfer of method, mindset, and responsibility from one era to the next.

That same feeling returned when I visited the IIT Madras Heritage Centre. Seeing similar instruments preserved, drawing boards, laboratory equipment, early computing devices, and handwritten notes was genuinely thrilling. It affirmed that engineering education itself has a heritage worth documenting. Not just the breakthroughs, but the pedagogy. Not just the outcomes, but the journey.

Engineering education in that earlier era was intensely tactile and manual. Students learned by drawing every line themselves, calculating every value, and understanding every error. The tools shaped the thinker. Precision was earned, not automated. The process trained the mind to slow down, observe, and respect accuracy.

The evolution of engineering education is not confined to formal museums. It lives in preserved instruments, inherited tools, and shared memories across generations. From wooden scales and drafting pens to heritage centres like IIT Madras, these traces reveal a discipline built on patience, precision, and responsibility. As tools change, the values they shaped endure, making engineering education itself a living, continuing legacy.

**“It affirmed that engineering education itself has a heritage worth documenting. Not just the breakthroughs, but the pedagogy. Not just the outcomes, but the journey.”**



*Rotring pens and other stationery items contributed to the Heritage Centre by Thomas Tharu.*



### **Thirupurasundari Sevel**

*is an architect-planner, author, storyteller, and historian. She is the founder of Nam Veedu Nam Oor Nam Kadhai, an initiative that explores heritage, history, and storytelling through exhibitions, workshops, and community projects. With a background in material restoration and conservation, her work focuses on documenting traditional design practices and creating inclusive, accessible urban spaces in collaboration with artisans, NGOs, and educational institutions.*

# THE NIGHTINGALE VISITS IIT MADRAS

M. S. SUBBULAKSHMI'S HISTORIC ASSOCIATION WITH IITM



Image source: <https://tamilculture.com/ms-subbulakshmi-and-the-modern-indian-feminine-ideal/>

M. S. Subbulakshmi with a veena.

## IIT

Madras is well known for its academic accomplishments. Besides, residents of our beautiful campus have been fortunate enough to enjoy a cultural milieu of music, dance, arts, and literature, of different kinds. In particular, music of different kinds and changing trends, ranging from classical Carnatic and Hindustani, through Folk and all X-woods (Kollywood, Bollywood, Tollywood, Mollywood, Sandalwood, etc.) to Western pop, rock, blues, jazz, fusion, and classical too, has been at the core of this cultural milieu.

The more popular and larger Open Air Theatre (OAT) has been the venue of and witness to the changing tastes and genres in music for all batches of students and at least three generations of faculty members, staff, and others on the campus. Complementing this

musical environment, sports and occasional theatre shows contributed to lively entertainment and all-round development of the audience. OAT continues to be a unique venue where legends of music perform, a few of them several times. The long list of legendary performers at our OAT includes Pandit Ravishankar (Hindustani Sitar), Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia (Hindustani Flute), Pandit Shivkumar Sharma (Hindustani Santoor), Ustad Amjad Ali Khan (Hindustani Sarod), Ustad Zakir Hussain (Hindustani Tabla), Ustad Bismillah Khan (Hindustani Shehnai), Pandit Jasraj (Hindustani Vocal), Vidwan Balamurali Krishna (Carnatic Vocal), Vidwan Chittibabu (Carnatic Veena), Vidwan Lalgudi Jayaraman (Carnatic Violin), Vidwan T. N. Krishna (Carnatic Violin), and the one and only Vidushi M. S. Subbulakshmi Amma (Carnatic Vocal), the Nightingale of India.

I had listened to MS Amma a few times on All India Radio before I joined IITM in 1971, and a couple of times live in Madras later during the 1970s. But never did I imagine that I would someday have to organise her recital in our own campus, the first and the only time she performed for us! This happened in the early 1990s when I was the Cultural Advisor. The credit for this should go to Krishna, our cultural secretary that year.

As is well known, IITM used to have Inter-Collegiate cultural competitions in what was then called the Literary and Cultural Week, organised annually by the Students' Gymkhana in January and usually with participation restricted to students of colleges in the city. In February 1974, this Cultural Week underwent a huge transformation and took a new avatar under the name "Mardi Gras" (MG), with the introduction of professional shows in a big way!

The preparations for Mardi Gras began the day student cultural secretaries were elected, very early in the academic year, or even earlier, i.e., late in the previous academic year, so that enough time would be available for planning the professional programmes and soliciting sponsors for the same. This really took a big jump once the globalisation of our

economy started via the Liberalisation, Privatisation, Globalisation or LPG policy of the Government of India, which was announced in 1991.

The budget for the festival kept on climbing higher and higher year after year. Sometimes it was driven by a feeling of competition between one set of Cultural Secretaries and their immediate successors. The new organising committee always wanted to 'best' the previous organising committees, all in good intentions

**"I had listened to MS Amma a few times on All India Radio before I joined IITM in 1971, and a couple of times live in Madras later during the 1970s. But never did I imagine that I would someday have to organise her recital in our own campus, the first and the only time she performed for us!"**



*A classical music performance by Pandit Ravishankar, Shri Ananda Shankar, and Ustad Zakir Hussain, at the Open Air Theatre during Mardi Gras, 1983.*

and, of course, in terms of the quality and popularity of the professional artists. Big multinational and national companies competed to sponsor the MG professional shows. In this scenario, the selection of Carnatic classical professional artists seemed to be less important when compared with attracting Hindustani classical artists. Globally famous artists were of a very high calibre without doubt, and had a much greater crowd-pulling capacity and fan following.

In such a fluid cultural setting, our then Student Cultural Secretary, Krishna, came to me one day and suggested we should get M. S. Subbulakshmi Amma for an MG opening day programme. I was thrilled that an artist of such eminence and of whose music I had only sweet memories, a celebrity of this class, could be there for the inaugural programme! Even as I jumped at the suggestion, I also expressed some reservations about the possible audience numbers and response, and more importantly, whether she would agree to perform in such a student-oriented and student-organised festival. At the back of my mind, there were two questions, one about a possible huge fee and the other about a suitable sponsor who would fund such a Carnatic classical programme in the OAT during MG.

Krishna assured me that the chances of MS Amma accepting our invitation were high, given the fact that he personally knew MS Amma's secretary, through whom we could try. This made me a bit more hopeful, and we started serious negotiations. After a few hits and misses, I was very happy and excited when Krishna informed me that he had an 'in principle' confirmation of MS Amma's consent to sing! We were then asked to visit her home to have a personal discussion about the details of the programme. I was overjoyed that a musically lay person like me, from a small town in Karnataka, had been blessed with this great opportunity to meet the most famous musician in the classical music firmament of the country and invite her to a performance in my alma mater, that too for the first time, and, as it turned out later, for the only time in the history of IITM!

MS Amma and her esteemed husband, Mr. Sadasivam lived in a modest house almost opposite the Valluvar Kottam, on Valluvar Kottam Road. With nervous anticipation of meeting the legend in flesh and blood and seeking her blessings, we went to their house. We were welcomed by Krishna's friend and MS Amma's secretary in the open foreground of the house, and some time later, Mr. Sadasivam came out to meet us.

We offered our respects, and he asked us to take our seats. He had all the features of a man in control and a no-nonsense approach to life. But, there was no sight of MS Amma! After he enquired about the date of the performance which was the first day of the festival during Pongal time (around 11th to 15th January), he unilaterally mentioned the duration of the recital, reeled off the keertanaigal (songs) MS Amma would sing and their order, the remuneration amount, and the names of two organisations to whom the remuneration was to be paid in the form of cheques right on the stage at the conclusion of the recital. The organisations were the Juvenile Diabetes Society and the Amar Seva Sangham.

Only then did I realise that the entire remuneration was to be paid as the couple's donation to other needy organisations, and not a single rupee to themselves! He made one concession, though, that MS Amma would sing one song of the students' choice! There was still no sight of MS Amma, to whom I wanted to offer my respects. Once the terms and conditions of the recital were dictated to us, he offered us *kashaayam*, a bitter but healthy home-made drink, saying he does not offer coffee, but only *kashaayam*! No choice either! Again, I was eagerly waiting for MS Amma to give her darshan, but no, we were served *kashaayam* by a house help. I was getting anxious to see MS Amma at least from a distance, but Mr. Sadasivam announced that the meeting was over and we could leave. I was looking pleadingly at Krishna to materialise a darshan of the legend, but he gave a helpless look, and we left, without a much-awaited and wished-for personal meeting with MS Amma. We saw her only on the day of the performance when she arrived at the OAT in her own car!

**“Only then did I realise that the entire remuneration was to be paid as the couple's donation to other needy organisations, and not a single rupee to themselves! He made one concession, though, that MS Amma would sing one song of the students' choice!”**

As the preparations for MG were going on in full swing, a few weeks before the actual performance, we got a call informing us that MS Amma was invited to perform at the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation around the same date as was earlier fixed for our MG! While we were initially shocked, we were greatly relieved that she was ready to sing at any later date of our choice! After intense discussions in our organising committee, we decided to postpone MG by about a week, and hit upon the idea of using the Republic Day holiday to cut down on 'classes suspended' for MG, and worked out the dates accordingly. This practice, I understand, continued for many years.

On the day of the performance, a big day for IITians, MS Amma and Mr. Sadasivam arrived at the OAT in their own car; they were guided to the backstage hall for last-minute rehearsal and preparation. One student helped MS Amma by carrying her tanpura with a sense of respectful duty. I could see that, as much as

**“The last time she and Mr. Sadasivam were at the OAT was most probably in 1967 during the Fourth Convocation when Sri C. Rajagopalachari was the chief guest.”**

I was, Krishna was visibly thrilled that his efforts were bearing fruit and MS Amma was actually in OAT in person, ready to sing! The last time she and Mr. Sadasivam were at the OAT was most probably in 1967 during the Fourth Convocation when Sri C. Rajagopalachari was the chief guest.

There was a great surprise waiting for us when the founder of the Amar Seva Sangham, Sri Ramakrishnan of Ayikudi, one of the recipients of that day's donation, arrived in a car right onto the OAT stage. I opened the front door of the vehicle, wished him a warm welcome, and extended my hand for a handshake, only to see his smiling face just looking up at me. I suddenly found two people in his accompanying group come up to him, bodily lift him, and place him in a wheelchair! He was paralysed from the neck down due to an unfortunate accident many years before, and all he could do was to greet people present there with a happy smiling face! He was being honoured for the tremendous social service he was doing for poor and disabled people in interior Tamil Nadu. I was left truly speechless and embarrassed for extending my hand to him for a handshake! I was even more pleasantly surprised when, after a few months, I received a letter from him informing me that a room had been added to an existing building in his village using the money that was donated to his organisation! He asked me to convey his thanks to the students of IITM for the gesture. He was duty, humility and gratitude personified in the face of personal adversity!



*An image captured during IIT Madras's Fourth Convocation in 1967 featuring M. S. Subbulakshmi (second row, third from left) and her husband Kalki Sadasivam (front row, second from left).*

After a divine concert, admired by a sizeable audience, during which her Nightingale-like voice permeated across and perhaps beyond the OAT, the humble and graceful persona that MS Amma was merged into the multifarious nature and natural sounds of flora and fauna on our campus. Our Dean handed over the cheques to the two organisations as desired by Mr. Sadasivam. He was sitting in the first row in the OAT in front of the stage, and he did not come on to the stage to present the donation cheque himself, but instead chose to give our Dean the chance to do so!

Krishna, Members of the MG Steering Committee, I, and some others of IITM, who experienced that magical night there that day, did not realise at that time that we were witnesses to institutional history in the making. MS Amma, the musical legend, never performed again on our campus. All of us, including Krishna and me, were truly blessed to have been an

integral part of that historic Classical Music Night. Naturally, I experienced the honour of listening to her a few more times in Madras. My final encounter with the Nightingale was on 11th December 2004. On reading about her demise in *The Hindu*, just as the annual year-end Madras Music Season unfolded, I rushed to her residence in Kotturpuram. I was among the earliest visitors. She was lying in peace in a casket. The immediate family members were waiting for VIP visitors. I touched her feet in one final expression of respect and, on my own behalf and on behalf of IITM, prayed for her eternal peace. I felt a sense of completion and fulfilment. The classical music world was robbed of its true gem, the Bharata Ratna, forever! But, our own OAT will forever hold and cherish the sacred memory of her graceful personality and the fragrance of her sonorous, ethereal voice and singing.



M. S. Subbulakshmi (second row, third from left), at the Fourth Convocation of IIT Madras in 1967.



### **Ajit Kumar Kolar**

*a retired faculty member of the Department of Mechanical Engineering at IIT Madras, was the first Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre and served as the Institute's Cultural Advisor from 1992 to 1996. In addition to his academic and administrative contributions, he is remembered for his abiding interest in classical music.*

# I'M SORRY!

21 GENERAL CHAMPIONSHIP VICTORIES, NOT 25!

**In** a previous article, I had written that IIT Madras's Inter-IIT General Championship (GC) tally stood at an impressive 25. This was a terrible blunder! While most people believe this to be the right number, the real number is (a still impressive) 21. But why this confusion, especially when the official Inter-IIT page mentioned 25 wins? Hang on, that is not it. The GC trophy engraving reveals that IIT Madras has 24 wins. Is there a method to this (metaphorical) madness?

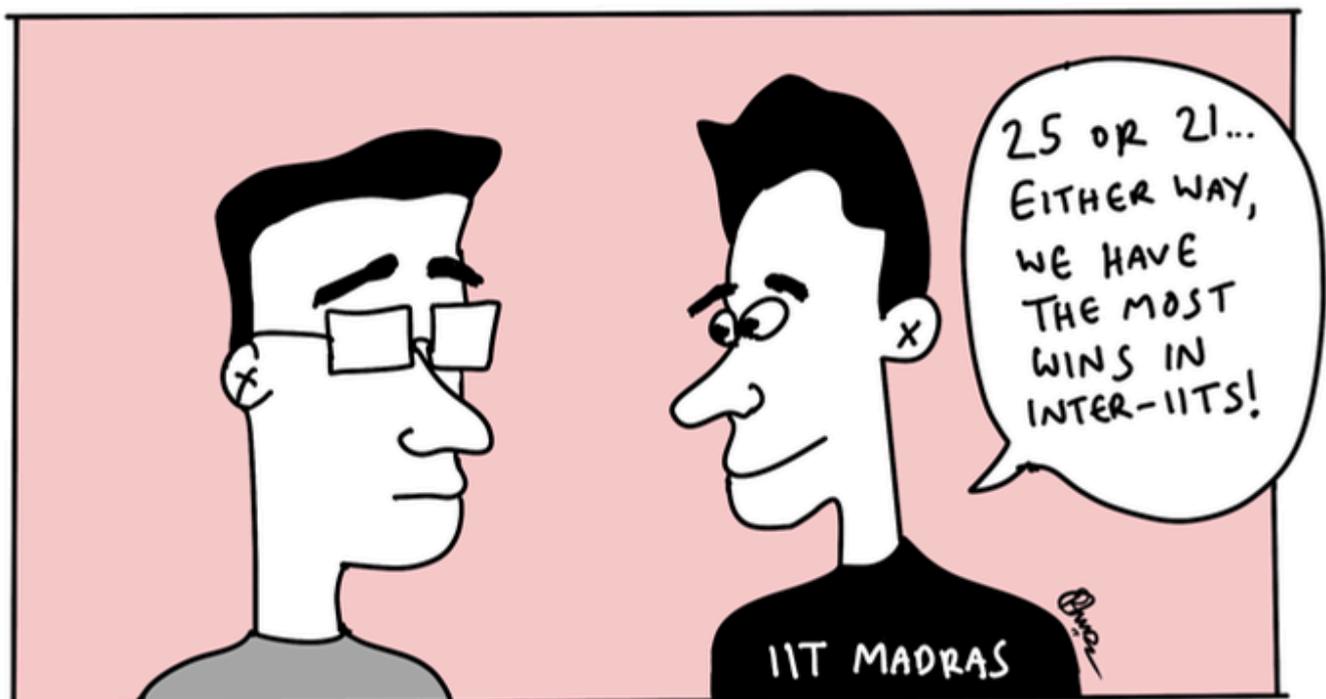
I will play it safe and blame it on nobody. The scoring system has undergone some changes over the years, particularly with the introduction of a separate Inter-IIT for women and an Inter-IIT Aquatics Meet as opposed to the initial separate Inter-IIT Meet for men. When the tournament began in 1961, the General Championship was decided based on which contingent scored the maximum points. At the time, there were only boys participating, so there was no need to introduce a separate women's tournament. In 1983, a separate women's championship was introduced, and in 1994,

an Aquatics Meet was introduced. I am not sure when the decision was officially made to include aquatics, women's, and men's events in determining the overall winner of the General Championship.

Owing to this, interpretations of the Annual Report of IIT Madras may vary if one isn't already aware of the scoring system.

When Prof. Sriram wrote to me in response to the January 2026 edition of Glass Panels, he told me that the Wikipedia page about the Inter-IIT Sports Meet was researched and written by him, so 21 victories was correct!

In what was a true face-palm moment, I realised I had committed a gaffe. I knew Prof. Sriram couldn't have made a mistake in calculating the total number of wins. He is known as the 'Rule Book', 'Encyclopedia', etc. —and with good reason.



# THE HERITAGE SQUARE

## CLASSIFIED DIVERTISEMENTS

**WARNING: TAKING THIS SERIOUSLY MAY RESULT IN RAISED EYEBROWS AND MILD CONFUSION.**

### CAN SOMEONE INVITE?

When golden rain brings warmth and dew,  
Fungal veins on the forest floor renew;  
Spotted domes on weathered dead woods grow,  
On shady woodlands display their magic show.  
Mushrooms here, mushrooms there, mushrooms everywhere!  
Where is the master chef to indulge us with savouries beyond compare?  
Button mushroom kormas or grilled Portobello smoky tikkas,  
Sautéed Oyster with garlic butter or Cremini stuffed with cream cheese paprikas.  
Oh! It's too much of a flavourful delicious dream,  
Let me stop! Can someone invite? I have no more words to rhyme!

- lamcravinggourmetmushrooms

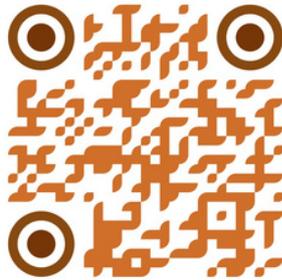
### YOUR VERY OWN LOCAL BABYSITTER AVAILABLE!

#### Services Offered:

- Custom Care: Care overloaded for toddlers, especially for those who behave more monkey-like, are mischievous, and imitate others. The messier, the more adored!
- Organic Meals: 100% healthy and organic meals and snacks provided
- Zero Screen Time Promise: Pure monkeying around in nature
- Creative Playing: Mowgli-style hands-on with jungle ropes; mastery in hide and seek; Mimicry, etc.

#### Timings and Payment:

- Flexible Hours: From sunrise to sunset at my tree-top canopy home with toddler pick-up and drop piggyback rides offered, or 24x7x365 days, I stay and work from your home.
- Affordable Rates: A dozen bananas per hour - Cavendish



## SUBMIT

your entries for the next issue!

## EARN

₹500 per entry if you get selected!

or Red, no dwarfs or rotten please. Exclusively on Sundays, a pizza with mozzarella cheese!

#### Smart Contact:

Just leave a window open. I'll find you.

- Promising Single Mother Ms.  
Cheeky Monkey

### LANTANA BUSH-SIDE MOCKTAIL SOCIAL

Come out of your post-Holi blues and ask the questions that your inner diva is dying to know about being the epitome of chic. Stop caterpillaring around and know how to go from a campus garden grub to a glam goddess. It's time to talk about the green carpet standout looks and the crown-worthy flutters from the glam queen herself.

**Special Guest:** The glam queen - Castalius Rosimon, reigning Miss Winged Wonder India, 2025

**Date:** A warm Saturday, 4.00 to 6.00 pm

**Dress Code:** Silken florals with winged accessories and stilettos

**Venue:** Multi-coloured Lantana bushes near the Bose Einstein Guest House Garden

**Prize for the Best Question:** A basket of Honeysuckles to suck on Nectarine mocktail sip stations will

be in plenty. This event is exclusively for our campus divas.

**Come Join Us. Sip, Sparkle and Flutter in Style!!!**

- Ms. Eleganz Grace

### SELLING SWEATERS

I am selling sweaters and hoodies I had purchased during the winter months for 30 rupees apiece. Those interested in purchasing them can meet me in person. I live in a burrow under the Gajendra Circle.

- A Confused Rabbit

### MISSING: A FLOCK OF SHEEP!

Someone told me *Glass Panels* is the best place to send advertisements and announcements. A few months back, I was counting sheep in my sleep and a strange fellow stole them all. He said that he needed their wool. He has promised to return the sheep, but he has not given them back thus far.

The sheep-thief had large front teeth, resembling that of a rabbit, and large, pointy ears. He was rather short and stocky. If anyone finds my sheep or the person described above, please contact me. I am not able sleep without my sheep!

- Sheep Deprived

# DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

It is always a privilege and delight to welcome eminent personalities to the Heritage Centre. From ministers and entrepreneurs to authors and Nobel laureates, the Centre has never been short of inspiring stories of distinguished visitors. Here, the past, present, and future of the Institute are carefully documented and displayed, making the Centre an essential stop on any visitor's itinerary. Presented below are glimpses of some of our most notable guests in September and October.



*Mr. Pardeep Kumar*  
 ZONAL HEAD OF INDIAN COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS

"It was a great honour to visit IITM and the Heritage Centre. This was my first visit as Zonal Head of Zonal Offices, Bengaluru, thanks."

14 JANUARY 2026



*Prof. M. S. Ananth*  
 FORMER DIRECTOR OF IIT MADRAS

19 JANUARY 2026



(1) *Prof. Garry Hanan*  
 UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL, CANADA

(2) *Prof. Michaela Cibian*  
 UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À TROIS-RIVIÈRES, MONTREAL, CANADA

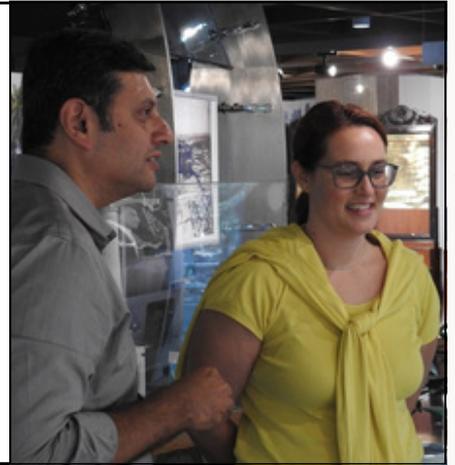
19 JANUARY 2026

19 JANUARY 2026

*Prof. Rita Esposito*

DELFT UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, NETHERLANDS

“Congratulations for keeping track of your history with such a dedication”.



20 JANUARY 2026

*(1) Mr. Christian Biever*

AMBASSADOR OF LUXEMBOURG TO INDIA

*(2) Ms. Jenny Halen Hedberg*

HEAD OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS,  
LUXEMBOURG

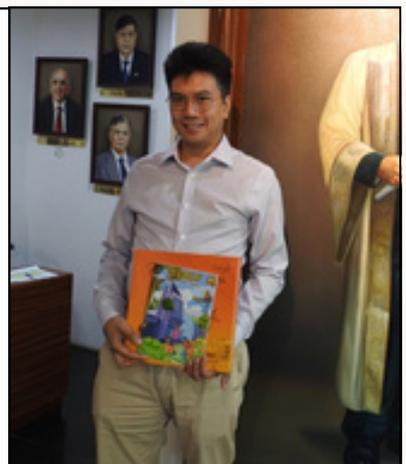


22 JANUARY 2026

*Mr. YAM Tunku Zain Al-Abidin Ibni*

FOUNDING PRESIDENT OF THE INSTITUTE FOR  
DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS (IDEAS),  
MALAYSIA

“Thank you for this wonderful tour explaining the history of this most important institute. Good work!”





*Dr. N. R. Dave*

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI OF 1970 BATCH

"I and my family members are very much impressed with the arrangements and audio visuals at the Heritage Centre."

27 JANUARY 2026



*Mr. Nick Booker*

CO-FOUNDER AND CEO OF INDOGENIUS, NEW DELHI

28 JANUARY 2026



*Captain Yogendra Singh Yadav*

RECIPIENT OF PARAM VIR CHAKRA

"Wonderful campus of IIT Madras."

29 JANUARY 2026

4 FEBRUARY 2026

*Mr. Michael Hasper*

CONSUL GENERAL OF GERMANY

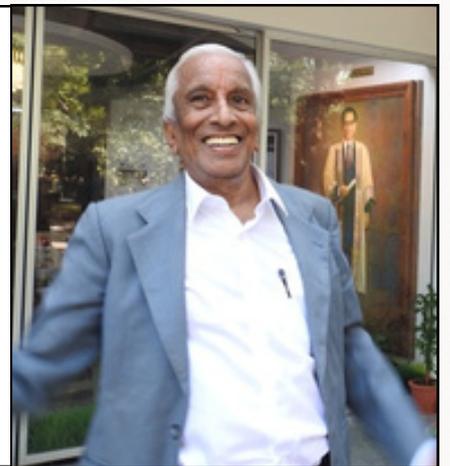
"IIT Madras – such a wonderful example of close Indo-German partnership!"



4 FEBRUARY 2026

*Prof. G. Rangarajan*

FORMER FACULTY MEMBER  
PHYSICS DEPARTMENT, IIT MADRAS  
(1977-2009)



5 FEBRUARY 2026

*Ms. Bhuvana Kamath*

BUSINESS JOURNALIST, ECONOMIC TIMES, BENGALURU

"Such a wonderful exhibit! Was super nostalgic and pretty excited. Mamata ma'am was super sweet!"





*Prof. Y. S. Chen*

NATIONAL CHUNG CHENG UNIVERSITY, TAIWAN,  
CHINA

“Impressive campus of IITM.  
Wonderful!”

6 FEBRUARY 2026



*Mr. David Pierre*

EDUCATION MINISTER OF SEYCHELLES

“Wonderful site with a rich history, hoping  
that Seychelles would be able to  
collaborate with the institute in areas of  
engineering as we plan to build a new  
STVTC and focus on STEM education  
moving forward as a country.”

6 FEBRUARY 2026



*Mr. Katsuhiko Kohara*

PRESIDENT OF DOSHISHA UNIVERSITY, JAPAN

“Tremendous!”

12 FEBRUARY 2026

12 FEBRUARY 2026

*Ms. Usha Padhee*

IAS, ODISHA GOVERNMENT

"I am honoured to have visited this incredible campus. It's not only home for the brightest minds in the country but also abode of values. I wish the faculty and students best of everything."



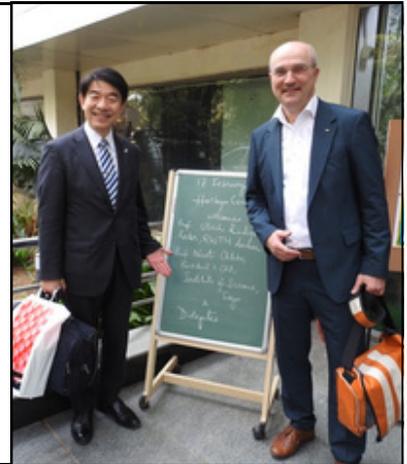
17 FEBRUARY 2026

*(1) Prof. Ulrich Rüdiger*

RECTOR, AACHEN UNIVERSITY, GERMANY

*(2) Prof. Naoto Ohtake*

PRESIDENT AND CEO OF INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, TOKYO

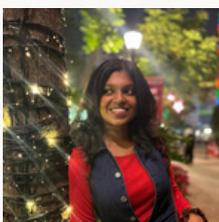
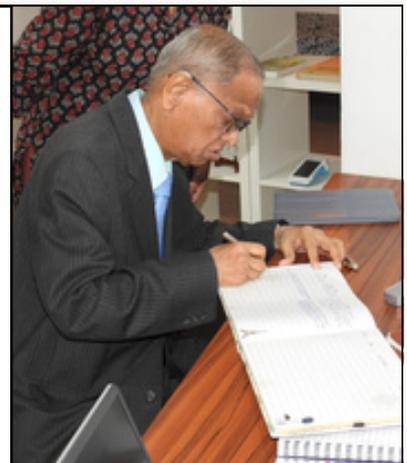


24 FEBRUARY 2026

*Mr. N. R. Narayana Murthy*

FOUNDER OF INFOSYS

"A treasure of academic history."



**M. Krishna Priya**

is a Project Associate at the Heritage Centre, IIT Madras. A postgraduate in history and an aspiring singer, she finds joy in performing. She also inclines to pick up new facts, untold stories, and conversations that spark discovery. Apart from this, she loves dabbling in video editing and watching movies. She can often be found skipping around the Heritage Centre, looking for new subjects to make Instagram reels about.



m.\_krishnapriya



ic43868@imail.iitm.ac.in



# News BITES

*Latest news from the Heritage Centre*

*March 2026*

## **IITM Zanzibar exhibition inaugurated at HC**



*Prof. Preeti Aghalayam, former IIT Madras Zanzibar Director, cuts the ceremonial ribbon to inaugurate the IITM Zanzibar exhibition at the Dome of the Heritage Centre.*

*On 13 January 2026, Prof. Preeti Aghalayam, former Director of IIT Madras Zanzibar, inaugurated a new exhibition titled IITM Zanzibar 2023-2025 at the Dome of the Heritage Centre.*

*Following the inauguration, the invitees from various centres and departments took a look at the exhibition.*

*The exhibition was curated and designed with the efforts of Ms. Sushmitha Sathasivam, Senior Graphic Designer, Heritage Centre, and Ms. Mamata Dash, Senior Project Officer. A team from the Office of Global Engagement was also involved in this project.*

*The exhibition has drawn considerable attention in the last couple of months.*



Alumna Ms. Akhila Raman and Prof. Arun Menon, Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre, take a look at images displayed on an iPad.



Prof. P. Sriram, former Faculty-in-Charge of the IIT Madras Heritage Centre, viewing a poster at the exhibition.



Prof. Raghunathan Rengaswamy, Dean, Global Engagement, takes a look at a poster on display at the exhibition.

# Nick Booker visits the Heritage Centre



Nick Booker and his team at the Heritage Centre.

Nick Booker, Co-Founder and CEO of IndoGenius, visited the Heritage Centre with a team of students from New Zealand on 28 January 2026.

The delegation was welcomed with a personalised welcome board.

The visitors were given an extensive tour of the Heritage Centre. During the visit, Booker could be seen filming videos for his social media channels, providing an unusual glimpse into vlogging from within such a setting.



Vanakkam! Nick and his team pose for a group photograph at the entrance of the Heritage Centre.

## Oral History Interviews

Oral History Interviews of Prof. G. Rangarajan and Prof. L. S. Ganesh were organised by the Heritage Centre. Prof. G. Baskaran interviewed Prof. Rangarajan, Prof. Jyotirmaya Tripathy, and Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam interviewed Prof. L. S. Ganesh.



Left: Prof. G. Rangarajan with Prof. G. Baskaran and Team Heritage Centre. Right: Prof. L. S. Ganesh with the NPTEL team and Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam.

# Prof. Arun Menon conducts a Heritage Walk



Prof. Arun Menon addresses participants of the heritage walk.

*Prof. Arun Menon, Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre, led a heritage walk for 30 participants on 21 February 2026. The special guided tour explored some of Madras's earliest law institutions and landmarks.*

*Some of the landmarks covered were the High Court of Madras (completed 1888), designed by J. W. Brassington in the Indo-Saracenic style, the Law College (completed 1899), designed by Henry Erwin, also in the Indo-Saracenic style, the Old Lighthouse of Madras (completed 1855), the city's second lighthouse, and the 17<sup>th</sup> century Tomb of Joseph Hynmer and David Yale, a site of historical debate.*

*IIT Madras has been actively involved in the recent restoration efforts, particularly following the introduction of the new underground metro corridor.*

*The group departed IIT Madras at 8:00 am, with the event continuing until 10:30 am. The tour formed part of a series of events organized to mark the Heritage Centre's 20th anniversary celebrations.*



Scenes from the heritage walk.



*Tomb of Joseph Hynmer and David Yale.*



*The Law College.*



*The Heritage Centre team presents a memento to Mr. Tekur Krishnamoorthi (Retd.) Additional Registrar, Madras High Court, and Curator, Madras High Court Museum.*

*The participants thoroughly enjoyed the walk and left with fond memories of the historic structures.*

*Labhesh A. S., a student, wrote a heartfelt email to the Heritage Centre staff after the heritage walk.*

Dear Heritage Centre Team,

I am writing to express my sincere appreciation for the wonderful heritage walk organised on Saturday. It was truly a one-of-a-kind experience and an incredibly enriching way to explore Madras' historic legal landmarks.

The tour guided by Prof. Arun Menon was insightful. I especially appreciated the depth of information he shared about Indo-Saracenic architecture, including the design and historical context of the Law College and the High Court. His explanations brought the buildings to life and helped us understand their architectural nuances and cultural significance in a much deeper way. The discussion around the Yale Monument and its fascinating connection to Yale University was another highlight that made the visit memorable.

The Heritage Centre's efforts in organising such thoughtfully curated events are truly commendable. The seamless coordination and overall experience reflected the dedication behind celebrating 20 years of the Centre's work in preserving and sharing our heritage.

I would also like to kindly request if the group photographs and any other memorable moments captured during the heritage walk could be shared with the participants. It would be wonderful to revisit and cherish those moments.

Thank you once again for organising such a meaningful and engaging event. I look forward to participating in future heritage activities.

Warm regards,  
Labhesh A. S.

# GLASS PANELS



Scan the QR code to read all the issues of *Glass Panels* on your device!



## ABOUT US

*Glass Panels* is the Heritage Centre's bi-monthly magazine. Over the last few years, it has gained immense popularity among alumni, campus residents and students. The magazine contains articles, poems, cartoons and much, much more. If you haven't got the opportunity to read this publication, it is never too late! Scan the QR code shared on this page and flip away!

“You don't know how it starts, you never know why and when it starts, this love of music, but it is the sweetest of all afflictions.”

- Pandit Mallikarjun Mansur

IIT Madras Bhashai le sollanum na “Willkommen, Herr Sriram!”



Art: @soulkadhistudio / Bhuva

To know more about the work we do,  
SCAN THE QR CODES:



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